UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/48/183
E/1993/74
3 June 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-eighth session
Item 12 of the preliminary list*
REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1993
Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda
COORDINATION QUESTIONS: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General

* A/48/50.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 43/178 of 20 December 1988, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to charge the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) with supervising the development of the programme of economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people and to report to the Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress made in implementing the resolution. Pursuant to the resolution, the Secretary-General submitted a report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/47/212-E/1992/54) to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

2. Following its consideration of the Secretary-General's report, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/170 of 22 December 1992 on assistance to the Palestinian people, in which it, inter alia, took note of the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people; expressed its appreciation to the States, United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that had provided assistance to the Palestinian people; requested the international community, the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to sustain and increase their assistance to the Palestinian people, in close cooperation with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), taking into account the economic losses of the Palestinian people as a result of the Persian Gulf crisis; urged the Government of Israel to accept de jure applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to all territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and to abide scrupulously by the provisions of that Convention; called for treatment on a transit basis of Palestinian exports and imports passing through neighbouring ports and points of exit and entry; also called for the granting of trade concessions and concrete preferential measures for Palestinian exports on the basis of Palestinian certificates of origin; further called for the immediate lifting of Israeli restrictions and obstacles hindering the implementation of assistance projects by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), other United Nations bodies and others providing economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory; reiterated its call for the implementation of development projects in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the projects referred to in its resolution 39/223 of 18 December 1984; called for facilitation of the establishment of Palestinian development banks in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a view to promoting investment, production, employment and income therein; recognized the need for convening a seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, and, in that regard, suggested to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to consider, in its programme for 1992-1993, convening such a seminar, taking into account the assistance needs of the Palestinian people in the light of the developments in the region; and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

3. On behalf of the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) wrote to the various concerned sources requesting information on the implementation of the resolution. Given below are summaries of the replies received.

4. Any additional information received will be issued as an addendum to the present report. The seminar on assistance to the Palestinian people requested in General Assembly resolution 47/170 and referred to in paragraph 2 above was held in Paris from 26 to 29 April 1993. The report of the seminar is being issued under the symbol A/48/168-E/1993/62.

II. REPLIES FROM THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. United Nations

1. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

5. UNCHS (Habitat) prepared and submitted to the fourteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, held at Nairobi from 26 April to 5 May 1993, a report entitled "Housing requirements of the Palestinian people" (HS/C/14/2/Add.1). The report was prepared pursuant to Commission resolution 13/6, which had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director and in cooperation with the PLO to devise a plan for the implementation of a shelter strategy for the Palestinian people to the year 2000, as contained in the report of the Executive Director on the housing requirements of the Palestinian people, together with the provision of necessary funds.

6. After its consideration of the report, the Commission on Human Settlements adopted resolution 14/9, in which it took note with satisfaction of the report of the Executive Director and requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director and in cooperation with the PLO, to take all the appropriate measures for the implementation of a national Palestinian housing strategy in the light of the report of the Executive Director and the recommendations contained therein in accordance with the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, as soon as possible. The Commission also requested the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) to take appropriate measures and conduct consultations with a view to facilitating the training and formation of the required Palestinian technical cadres necessary to secure the national housing requirements of the Palestinian people. A report on the actions taken by UNCHS (Habitat) in implementation of resolution 14/9 will be submitted to the fifteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, to be held at Nairobi from 19 to 25 April 1995.

7. UNCHS (Habitat) is also at present in the process of preparing, on behalf of the Secretary-General, a report on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory for submission to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. The report is being prepared pursuant to Assembly resolution 46/162 of 19 December 1991, which requested the Secretary-General to consider ways and means of improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory and, pending the exercise of their right to self-determination, to plan for concerted economic and social actions by the United Nations system (see also E/1993/64).

2. United Nations Children's Fund

UNICEF programmes for Palestinian children and women in the occupied territories and neighbouring States

(a) Occupied territories

8. In accordance with its mandate, UNICEF has long been associated with efforts aimed at providing humanitarian support to Palestinian children and women in the occupied territories. For over a decade, its Executive Board has repeatedly confirmed its commitment to the cause of alleviating the situation of these vulnerable children and women by adopting specific programmes for them.

9. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 33/112 B of 18 December 1978, UNICEF began its programme of assistance in 1980 to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Executive Board periodically renewed UNICEF programme support in the territories, and adopted long-term programmes of assistance in 1984, 1988 and 1992.

10. In 1991, the Executive Board, in its decision 1991/15, requested the Executive Director to continue to urgently assess the situation of Palestinian children and women and to provide funds commensurate with the expanding needs of those children and women, and to report to the 1992 session of the Executive Board on implementation. Thus, the 1992-1994 programme of cooperation for the West Bank and Gaza Strip represents part of the UNICEF response to that directive.

11. UNICEF is committed to providing a total of $2,175,000 from its general resources during the three-year period of the current programme and will seek an additional $2,175,000 from specific-purpose contributions from donors, out of which almost $1 million has already been received in the first year, with additional pledges under negotiation.

12. Major objectives of the programme include the reduction of child and maternal mortality and morbidity; the expansion and upgrading of early childhood development activities; improvement in the quality and relevance of education both in and out of school; and the extension of physiotherapeutic and psychosocial rehabilitation services for disabled children. The overall strategy of the UNICEF-assisted programme is to strengthen the implementation capacity of local organizations and to promote cooperation among service providers through joint policy planning, information sharing and implementation.

13. Among more specific objectives of the programme, UNICEF is committed to providing support to 42 local clinics run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to sustain and expand immunization coverage to reach 200,000 Palestinian children, with measures aimed at controlling diarrhoeal diseases; reaching 500,000 mothers and children under the anaemia control project; strengthening the capacity of 200 local clinics to control acute respiratory infections; supporting 500 primary schools; providing training for 5,000 teachers, and also local physiotherapists, social and health workers; providing physiotherapy services to 3,000 children and supporting rehabilitation of children with psychological and social problems arising from exposure to conflict situations. UNICEF undertakes these activities in close

cooperation and coordination with international and national agencies, notably with UNRWA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

14. UNICEF also implements specific programmes of assistance to Palestinian children and women in three countries, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

(b) Jordan

15. The programme in Jordan with annual funding of $200,000 from general resources and $200,000 from specific-purpose contributions, aims to serve the needs of non-camp Palestinians residing in squatter and poor areas of the Amman-Zarqa region, and other major urban areas of the country. It has become clear that this is the most important UNICEF target group, while the camp Palestinians are reasonably well covered by UNRWA services. As a means of reaching this target group better, UNICEF cooperates with over 40 local and international non-governmental organizations. The programme has three components: child and maternal health, education and the urban family, and is closely linked with and complementary to the main UNICEF country programme in Jordan.

(c) Syrian Arab Republic

16. The programme for Palestinians in the Syrian Arab Republic has the same funding levels as that for Palestinians in Jordan above, and comprises three components: child and maternal health, women's development and early childhood development. While continuing to maintain cooperation with UNRWA and the government agency for Palestinians, GOPAR, a special emphasis is placed on fostering community action and mobilizing the extensive network of non-governmental organizations that exists in the Palestinian community.

17. Health-related interventions aim to sustain and expand achievements in protection against preventable diseases, in control of diarrhoeal diseases and acute respiratory infections. The women's development project has as its major objectives the reduction of female illiteracy and the increase of women's share in the paid labour force. The early childhood development project continues efforts to reduce trauma and difficulties associated with growing up in a refugee community and to develop basic social and coping skills of Palestinian children.

(d) Lebanon

18. The programme for Palestinians in Lebanon has been approved with an annual financing level of $350,000 from general resources and the same amount from specific-purpose contributions. Sectoral objectives include the reduction of child and maternal mortality, promotion of early childhood stimulation opportunities and facilities, empowering women with education and vocational skills to improve their participation in the economic life of the community, and expanding and improving water supply and sanitation, primarily for displaced Palestinians. The programme strategy emphasizes strengthening coordination between partners of programme implementation, fostering community action through encouraging self-help schemes and mobilizing the participation of Palestinian non-governmental organizations as well as enhancing their implementation capacities.

3. United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

19. Work of the UNCTAD secretgariat on assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory during the period from March 1992 to March 1993 was intensified in the four main areas of activity: (a) monitoring and analysing policies and practices of Israeli occupation authorities that hamper economic development in the occupied Palestinian territory; (b) investigating the impact of such policies and practices on main economic sectors; (c) developing the database, including the dissemination of quantitative and qualitative information on the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory; and (d) coordinating with, and contributing to, the relevant activities of the organizations of the United Nations system in response to General Assembly resolutions on assistance to the Palestinian people and on economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory. In carrying out work in those areas, close contacts were maintained with Palestine, in addition to consultations with other parties concerned.

20. With regard to monitoring, work was undertaken for the preparation of the eighth report of the secretariat on assistance to the Palestinian people for consideration by the Trade and Development Board at the first part of its thirty-ninth session. In addition to highlighting recent developments in the policy environment, including the continuing impact of the Gulf crisis on the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the report focused on identifying pressing problems and needs and recommending feasible measures for action aimed at reviving the Palestinian economy and improving the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people.

21. Within the context of the intersectoral project investigating prospects for sustained economic and social development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, work was intensified on the preparation of the 25 in-depth field studies covering the main economic and social sectors. Part one of those studies, dealing with an analysis of the prevailing situation, identification of problems and needs, and consideration of measures for immediate action, has been largely completed. Concurrently, the study initiated by the Special Economic Unit on a conceptual and substantive framework to provide guidelines for the preparation of parts two and three of the field studies dealing with future prospects has also been completed, along with a detailed supplement on various technical aspects of the framework. Accordingly, a quantitative framework has been established investigating, under different scenarios, possibilities for the sustained development of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the period 1990-2010.

22. In accordance with the work plan of the intersectoral project, a meeting of experts, Palestinian and international, which was also attended by representatives of different United Nations agencies and regional organizations, was convened at Geneva from 19 to 22 May 1992 (a) to discuss and adopt the findings of part one of the 25 in-depth individual studies, thus providing a consolidated report on the prevailing economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territory along with specific measures appealing to the Israeli occupation authorities, to the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to the international community for immediate action; and (b) to consider the quantitative framework for investigating the future prospects of the Palestinian economy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip under parts two and

three of the individual studies. Consultations are now under way with all the directly concerned parties on the outcome of the meeting of experts, on the quantitative framework, and other related aspects of the intersectoral project. It is intended to finalize and issue the report of the experts and the study of the quantitative framework upon completion of the consultations.

23. As part of the requirements of the intersectoral project, work on the development of the secretariat database on the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory was intensified. Available statistical series covering national income, population, labour and employment, balance-of-payments and external trade for the period 1968-1987 have been standardized and classified along the lines of the economic time series in use in the UNCTAD secretariat and stored in the computer facilities of the secretariat for future reference. These series have also been issued (UNCTAD/RDP/SEU/6 and UNCTAD/DSD/SEU/1) and disseminated widely, including to research and educational institutions, so as to provide a uniform set of statistics on the economy of the West Bank and Gaza Strip covering the 20-year period 1968-1988.

24. Work is currently under way on finalizing part one of a selected number of the 25 field studies, which deals with an analysis of developments in various economic and social sectors over the past 25 years, problems and needs, and measures for immediate action. Those selected studies will be issued individually as and when finalized.

25. At the request made during the thirty-ninth session of the Trade and Development Board, based on Principle 23 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the UNCTAD secretariat has initiated the preparation of an in-depth study of the environmental dimension of Israeli policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and their impact on the economic and social situation of the Palestinian people. The study, which is being prepared within the context of the intersectoral project, is structured to deal with (a) present environmental conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, major problem areas and their bearing on the social and economic situation; (b) present and future areas of environmental concern that are expected to have a growing influence on development prospects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip beyond the year 2000; and (c) policy guidelines and project ideas for immediate and long-term action at the local, regional and international levels.

26. In line with the work programme requirements and the provisions of General Assembly resolutions adopted during the period under review, the UNCTAD secretariat has stepped up its efforts to strengthen coordination and cooperation with the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and with regional and non-governmental organizations involved in work on the economic and social situation of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This has included contributing to meetings, participating in inter-agency discussions and field mission to Tunis and Cairo for consultations and data collection.

4. United Nations Office at Vienna

27. The Division for the Advancement of Women had prepared a report, in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/16 on the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory, which was presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session, held at Vienna from 17 to 26 March 1993, as a note by the Secretary-General. It describes the present situation of women in the critical areas of family life, economy and employment, education and health, with special attention to psychological well-being.

28. The Commission on the Status of Women transmitted draft resolution VII, entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women", to the Economic and Social Council for adoption. In that resolution the Secretary-General was requested to assist in and review the situation of Palestinian women using all available resources, including missions of experts to the occupied Palestinian territory, and to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution, including recommendations and a programme of action aimed at improving conditions of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session (see E/1993/27, sect. I). The Division for the Advancement of Women will be responsible for the preparation of that report.

5. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

29. At its sixteenth session, held at Amman from 30 August to 3 September 1992, ESCWA adopted two resolutions on Palestinian development. The first, resolution 184 (XVI), relates, inter alia, to the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian Arab people and calls for supporting the secretariat's activities, which include studies, conferences, seminars and workshops concerned with the Palestinian people, giving priority to rebuilding the institutional framework for development.

30. Resolution 182 (XVI) declares the period 1994-2003 a Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Decade for Western Asia. Under the resolution, efforts relating to reconstruction and rehabilitation of development activities will be mobilized. It requests ESCWA to provide technical assistance for the implementation of projects during the Decade for various countries and areas, including the occupied Palestinian territory.

31. ESCWA initiated the implementation of the above-mentioned resolutions by undertaking field missions in coordination with the UNDP office at Jerusalem (Occupied Palestinian Territory). A mission was undertaken by the ESCWA Regional Adviser on Development Issues and Policies aimed at analysing the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory and proposing an integrated programme of work for ESCWA. A closer coordination process has been initiated between ESCWA and UNDP/Jerusalem whereby joint activities will be discussed and coordinated. Field visits and ESCWA technical assistance to institutions in the occupied Palestinian territory have also been initiated. A second mission was undertaken to the occupied territory by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/ESCWA to prepare a report

on the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in the territory and to identify priority projects (see paras. 35 and 36).

32. A training workshop and planning and appraisal of rural development projects was organized by the joint FAO/ESCWA Division in collaboration with the UNDP office at Jerusalem. The workshop, which took place at Jerusalem from 26 July to 12 August 1992, was attended by 32 trainees from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

33. ESCWA contributed actively to the discussions of the above-mentioned seminar held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 26 to 29 April 1993. ESCWA gave a presentation to the seminar that centred on ESCWA's recent experience and priority areas and projects related to development assistance to the Palestinian people.

34. Arrangements are being made to carry out the following activities in 1993:

(a) A socio-economic survey on the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories;

(b) Building up the institutional infrstructure for development in the occupied Palestinian territories with special emphasis on the development of financing institutions;

(c) Impact of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories;

(d) Promoting employment opportunities in the occupied Palestinian territories. A plan to hold a seminar on the issue is under consideration.

35. ESCWA, in collaboration with FAO, has completed a study on the rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in the occupied Palestinian territories. Two field missions to the territories were undertaken by the staff of the Joint ESCWA/FAO Agriculture Division in order to identify and prepare project documents for priority development projects to be submitted to donors for possible funding. The following project documents are being finalized:

(a) Land reclamation and development;

(b) Rehabilitation of deep wells, mainly for irrigation purposes;

(c) Rehabilitation of springs and irrigation canals;

(d) The establishment of a central laboratory for veterinary services.

36. Coordination is being made with the UNDP office at Jerusalem and with FAO to pursue the implementation of a group of agricultural and water resource development projects.

37. Discussions are under way with the Islamic Development Bank for a joint programme of action to support the development in the occupied Palestinian territories.

B. Specialized agencies

1. International Fund for Agricultural Development

38. While IFAD is interested in the operations in the occupied territories, the Agreement establishing IFAD and its rules and procedures unfortunately limits assistance to countries that are members of the Fund. Article 3 (1A) of the Agreement establishing IFAD stipulates that membership of the Fund shall be opened to any State member of the United Nations or of any of its specialized agencies, or of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In addition, article 7 (1B) of the same document states that financing by the Fund shall be provided to developing States that are members of the Fund or to intergovernmental organizations in which such members participate.

39. IFAD looks forward to being able to extend assistance in the near future to the Palestinian people in line with its mandate.

2. International Labour Organisation

ILO technical activities for the benefit of workers and employers in the occupied Arab territories

40. ILO has had a technical cooperation programme for the Arabs in the occupied Arab territories since 1980. This activity is in response to a request from the International Labour Conference to the Governing Body and the Director-General of the Office to provide all types of assistance and support to Arab citizens in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories to strengthen their economic and technical capabilities and to counteract the effects of the Israeli occupation and settlement policy. Funds from the Organisation's regular budget for technical cooperation have been allocated to projects in the occupied territories.

41. The technical cooperation programme is prepared and updated in line with the needs indicated by the beneficiaries themselves. To define those needs, the exchange of views that takes place during the missions sent each year by the Director-General to Israel, the occupied Arab territories and the Arab countries of the region are taken into consideration. All the parties concerned are consulted, as well as the PLO, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly concerning assistance to the Palestinian people. In addition, the discussions held at inter-agency and other meetings concerning economic and social assistance extended to the Palestinian people under the auspices of the United Nations are taken into consideration.

42. Under inter-agency agreements, ILO is able to collaborate in implementing its programme with UNDP in East Jerusalem to carry out its programme of assistance to the Palestinian people. This collaboration takes two forms: ILO may provide UNDP with experts for UNDP projects being carried out on the spot or, in the case of an ILO project, UNDP takes on the practical coordination and provides its good offices vis-à-vis the Israeli authorities and its knowledge of the area. So far, and since 1980, this collaboration has always been efficient and productive, and it meets with the satisfaction of both agencies.

43. The current ILO projects cover trade union training and vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped. Other projects are now in the pipeline, mainly a series of seminars for Palestinian employers, including chambers of commerce and industry. Concerning trade union training, ILO held three courses for some 30 participants in Nablus, Bethlehem and Gaza in April-May 1992, and similar arrangements have been made for 1993.

44. The project concerning the vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped, organized jointly with UNDP and UNRWA, began in October 1991. Three consultants were sent for a period of six weeks to hold specialized vocational training seminars for personnel responsible locally for vocational rehabilitation and training as well as placement of the handicapped. This project is to be implemented over a three-year period and is continuing in 1993.

45. A continuation of the activity is foreseen in other areas of competence of ILO in which its expertise and experience can be useful - such as vocational training - and there are plans to continue consultations to determine other needs, such as those of small enterprises. ILO attaches considerable importance to the extension of its technical cooperation programmes to assist the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It is to be hoped that circumstances will allow for the further development of the programme.

3. United Nations Industrial Development Organization

46. While the general scarcity of financial resources still prevails, UNIDO approved two projects in late 1992:

(a) Technical advisory services ($49,000) from its own resources (Industrial Development Fund), to allow provision of services to the industry in the occupied territory at short notice;

(b) Training programme for small industries ($180,000), under a trust fund from Japan to be carried out in September 1993, where preparatory work has been completed.

47. It is hoped that the renewed effort of UNIDO, though modest, will further bear fruit in the future.